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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 000658

SIPDIS

FOR S/USSES, AF, AND EUR/NB TSELINGER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#) [NO](#)

SUBJECT: NORWAY WELCOMES SUDAN STRATEGY, GIVES PROGNOSIS
FOR TALKS

REF: STATE 109669

Classified By: Political Counselor Cherrie Daniels for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Norway welcomes our Sudan strategy rollout, and, given Norway's already close cooperation with us within the U.S.-U.K.-Norway Troika, the MFA was not surprised at all by its content. Commenting on the situation in Sudan, GON officials said that although there seems to be forward movement with regard to the talks on the referendum, there appears to be a split within the SPLM between those who accept the compromise 50 percent plus 1 majority and 66 percent turnout deal and those who do not. The Norwegians also raised the question of whether current North-South negotiations are "broader than they appear outwardly to be," and added that it will be very interesting to see how the GOS reacts to the Mbeki report, which suggests hybrid Sudanese/international courts to handle Darfur cases. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Poloff met October 28 with Hanne-Marie Kaarstad, Senior Advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Horn of Africa Section, to deliver reftel message. Normally, emboffs would meet with Endre Stiansen, MFA Sudan Coordinator, but he had just left for the region.

¶3. (C) Kaarstad pronounced our new Sudan strategy, and the talking points that accompanied reftel, "much in line with our expectations given our close work with the U.S. team in the Troika." She said that its outlines were in agreement with the Norwegian view that this must be a broad engagement between the international community and Sudan, and that the Darfur issue cannot be isolated from issues surrounding the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the north and the south. She emphasized that Norway continues to be very interested in continuing close cooperation with the United States on this issue.

¶4. (C) Kaarstad said that, at this time, it was still too early to give her evaluation of how our new strategy was perceived within the region. She said that Khartoum has been very critical, with the Sudanese embassy in Oslo giving out the same message as the Sudan Tribune. The negative reaction largely revolves around the genocide issue. But, "what they really think isn't in public statements," she said.

¶5. (C) When asked for her prognosis for Sudan, she responded that the picture was "clouded." She noted that it is positive that the north and south are engaged in crucial discussions on referendum and election modalities. However, there are intense discussions within the SPLM on how to formulate their stance. The date of the referendum is an absolute red line for the SPLM, she said. Norway believes it is important to encourage the parties to clarify their positions and be responsible in finding solutions. The

recent agreement of a 50 percent plus one majority to determine the secession issue, plus the 66 percent turnout requirement, are positive results from the talks between vice president Ali Uthman Muhammad Taha and Riek Machar. But the 66 percent number is very difficult for some in the SPLM to swallow.

¶16. (C) Kaarstad raised the possibility that there may be a "package agreement" being worked out outside of international observers' earshot, dealing with border issues, post 211 issues, and election issues. She framed the question as, "Are negotiations broader than they appear to be?" She hoped that Mr. Stiansen's trip to the region, where he was meeting up with Marti Flacks of Special Envoy Gration's office, would hopefully lead to answers.

¶17. (C) Kaarstad added that it will be very interesting to see the GOS's reaction to the Mbeki report's recommendation for "hybrid" courts consisting of jurists from Sudan and other countries. She viewed it as interesting and helpful that the Mbeki report underlines that this is not merely a "Darfur crisis" but a crisis occurring within the entire Sudan context. She said the Mbeki report puts "good pressure" on the GOS.

¶18. (C) Kaarstad ended on a note of worry about the quantity of armaments, and their destabilizing impact, in southern Sudan. While many in the south accuse the north of introducing these arms, Kaarstad said Norway is not convinced this is the explanation.

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